

Ciel Cohousing Points Of Demonstration

Project Location:

6000 17th Avenue S.W. Three vacant lots between 16th and 17th Avenue S.W. Puget Ridge/Delridge neighborhood, West Seattle, across from South Seattle Community College, SF 5000 Zone. New construction of 23 housing units and common facilities.

Project Description:

A hillside cohousing community with 23 owner occupied homes is proposed, with planning by the residents and a strong pedestrian focus, and is currently in for MUP review. Corrections were submitted on June 17 and July 18, 1998. Shared amenities and responsibilities including a common house for gatherings, meals, child play, home crafts, laundry, and care of the community are key features. Special consideration for young and aging households are being made through voluntarily increased ADA features and expandability of space over time.

Affordability Features:

Three to five households are planned to be at or below 80% of median income with down payment assistance program involvement. Approximately ten households will be below 115% of median income. The project is targeted to be below median cost for new construction.

Code Challenges:

An Administrative Conditional Use Permit is required, with, possibly, Judicial Conditional Use.

The project is being reviewed under L-1 zoning codes for height and bulk.

Cluster housing is planned per provisions and requirements of housing in critical areas (25.09.260). This use is conditional and award of permit is not straightforward.

Private open space requirements for area, landscaping, and screening run counter to the community philosophy of cohousing. A more natural, shared landscaping scheme is desired.

Two mother-in-law units within the 23 units appear to be allowed by code, but were discouraged by DCLU at pre-application.

Full street improvements are being required at 17th Avenue S.W. Moderate street improvements that preserve the landscaped right-of-way strongly desired by the neighborhood and Ciel Cohousing have not been allowed to date.

Concentrated parking has been discouraged by DCLU.

Front yard and interior setbacks between buildings, as currently interpreted by DCLU, will possibly exceed those desired by Ciel Cohousing.

On site childcare, home offices, or guest quarters within the common buildings have been discouraged or disallowed by DCLU.

The common structures are designated as accessory buildings to a residential use. It is not clear whether this will be permitted.

DCLU may require a subdivision, which runs counter to the community focus of cohousing. Cluster housing provisions are not explicit on this matter, and the issue was raised late in the review process.

Community Planning:

Ciel Cohousing has worked with the neighborhood to obtain consensus and support. Four letters have gone out to all immediate neighbors, and presentations and discussions have been made with the Puget Ridge and Tri councils, and Delridge Neighborhood planning group. The project was reviewed at the Mayor's Delridge neighborhood meeting. A buffer solution with the neighbor to the north has been independently resolved. Several letters of support from neighborhood members and groups are available for review.

Proposed Solutions:

The planned project is sensitive to neighborhood planning goals, and preservation and enhancement of vegetated slopes, trees, and wetlands. Cohousing planned models have proven effective in building vibrant and healthy communities around the world.

The proposed project exceeds total quantity of landscaping and open space required. The design as planned with less defined private open space is more suitable to cohousing and its community philosophy, and it is hoped that it will be permitted as drawn.

Two future accessory dwelling units would be in owner occupied, single family homes with secondary entrances for the mother-in-law units per code requirements. It is hoped the units will be permitted, within the spirit of providing affordable, community based housing.

The current street right-of-way is used as an informal park and trail system by the neighborhood. Ciel and the neighborhood hope that these features could remain largely intact. Demonstration and neighborhood planning processes have been supportive.

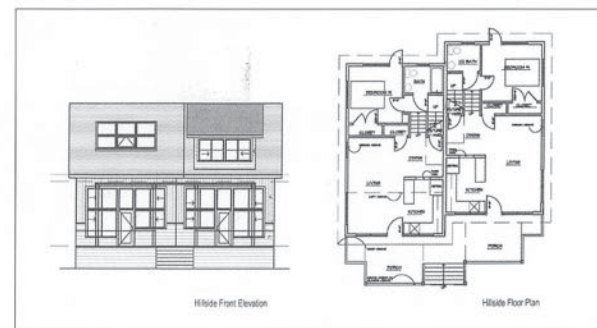
A decrease in impervious surface, reduction of curb cuts, and preservation of open landscaping would result from the cohousing planning approach. The proposed parking is heavily screened and buffered from the street and the only adjoining neighbor property. Concentrated parking is consistent with the pedestrian oriented goals of cohousing.

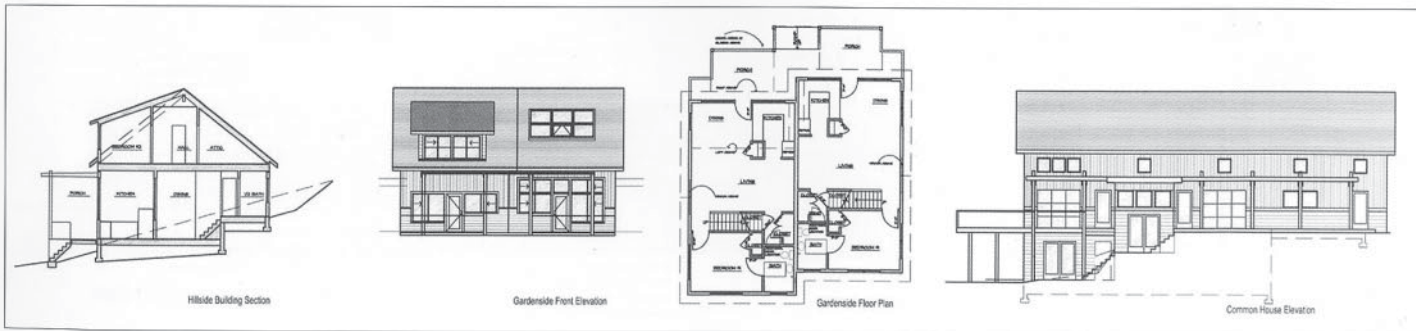
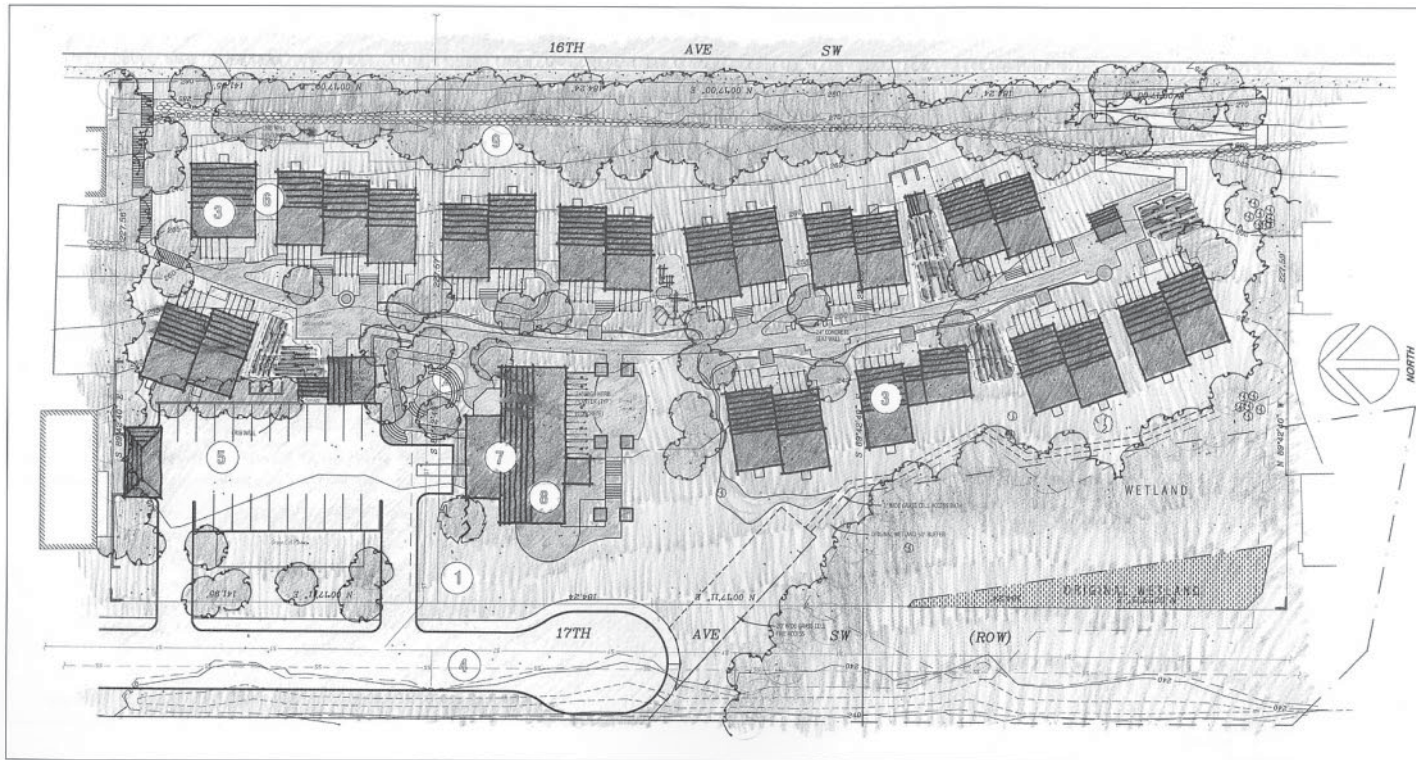
A 25% reduced front yard setback is conditionally allowed to preserve critical areas. L-1 setbacks are appropriate to pedestrian scale, creating informal intimate outdoor gathering spaces. (Residential setbacks may be required.) Excessive setbacks discourage community building.

The units will be primarily, if not completely, owner occupied. The Common House is an "extension" of the residences. Smaller individual units, with commonly used amenities in a common house increase efficient use of resources and affordability in a gracious and logical manner.

The City has permitted a similar project. It is vital that construction for the planned accessory buildings be permitted as intended for use.

Condominium law provides a reasonable way to identify ownership more consistent with the community spirit of cohousing. Separate tracts are antithetical to shared responsibilities and amenities.





Ciel Cohousing Puget Ridge/Delridge Multi-unit housing

Architect:
Arellano/Christofides Architects
Seattle, WA

Owner/Developer:
Ciel Cohousing

Landscape/Planning:
Bob Foley and Associates

Neighborhood Advocate:
Sandy Lea

Project Summary & Jury Comments
New construction of 23 housing units with common facilities on three vacant lots "doesn't break the box." The jury believes that we need good examples of this housing type, which offers a choice whose popularity and value seems likely to increase. Provision of a varied look and function among the units, and the plan incorporating generous and usable social spaces within the site by combining usual backyard space into playground, garden, and communal space, struck a positive chord with the jury. In this case, a plus comes from keeping half of the units affordable.